Governor Calls For Probe of Crime Charge

9-14-67

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—Gov. John J. McKeithen said today he has ordered an investigation into charges that criminal influences exist at all levels of state government.

The governor said if allegations that crime exists in state government prove true, "the people of this state will have my resignation so fast it will make their heads swim.

He said he would quit because if the allegations are correct, "either I'm a crook or I'm too stupid to be governor."

McKeithen said at his regular news conference that he, special state police investigators and an FBI agent will meet with the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission next week to study its evidence.

THE GOVERNOR again angrily commented on a Life magazine article on criminal influences in Louisiana state and local government. He called it a "deliberate smear" on the state.

Whoever is responsible for the article "should leave the state," he said.

Asked if he referred to Aaron Kohn, head of the MCC, McKeithen replied: "If the shoe fits, let him wear it."

THE CRIME commission said last week it supplied the basic information. The governor said that he and members of a special state police investigating team would meet with the MCC soon to collect whatever information the private group has.

"Whoever gave that information to Life Magazine about state government did this state a great disservice," he said.

The governor also commented on other issues:

He said that efforts are being made to get the federal court to alter its judgment in the grant-in-aid case to

See M'KEITHEN— Page 4

McKeithen--

Continued from Front Page

permit the state to provide funds for mentally retarded children.

Law enforcement, he said, is the number one issue in the country today. He criticized the national leadership on this score and said he did not know if he could support President Johnson for reelection.

McKeithen said he has no plans to sign a civil service pay raise schedule recommended by the State Civil Service Commission earlier this year until he is certain adequate funds will be available to support one.

Asked if he planned to be a favorite son candidate at the Democratic National Convention next year, McKeithen said he did not think the convention would accept him as a candidate. He said although it might help him politically to support former Gov. George Wallace of Alabama now for president, he did not plan to make a decision on that yet.

M'KEITHEN said that he "accepts" the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy, but this does not necessarily mean he "thinks" it is correct. He said he accepts it on the basis of those doing the investigating but declined to explain his definition of the word "accept." He added that District Attorney Jim Garrison should be allowed to complete his investigation. Otherwise, the nation or the world will believe that political pressure was brought to bear to end it prematurely, he explained.

On the Life magazine articles on crime in Louisiana, Gov. McKeithen said, "There is no question this state has been terribly smeared."

He said, "I hope we can recuperate and cure the terrible image that has been projected about us throughout the nation."

The governor said that the only reason for the alleged smear that he could figure out is the indictment of Walter Sheridan, an investigator for the National Broadcasting Co., by Garrison in the Kennedy assassination probe.

HE DECLARED that there is crime in other states surrounding Louisiana, but the magazine picked on Louisiana apparently because rackets figure Carlos Marcello lives in the New Orleans area.

"They know they can take Marcello and smear anybody," the governor said.

The governor said again that the state will investigate itself first and then "we shall" investigate other allegations on the local level. He said that if the magazine allegations on the state level were true, then the state level would have to be probed first —"You can't have crooks invstigating crooks."

HE SAID THAT if a panel of three ministers found that there was criminal influences on the state government level, then he would resign as gov-

ernor.

McKeithen said he has ordered Col. Thomas Burbank, director of the Department of Public Safety, to notify all of the sheriffs whose parishes were mentioned in the magazine articles as places where gambling flourished to clean up if any of the charges are true.